

## WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A fusion protein comprising a fluorescent protein,  
said fusion protein having a half life of no more than about ten  
5 hours.

2. The fusion protein of claim 1, wherein said  
fluorescent protein is selected from the group consisting of EGFP,  
10 ECFP and EYFP.

3. The fusion protein of claim 2, wherein said fusion  
protein comprises a PEST sequence-containing portion of a C-  
terminus of murine ornithine decarboxylase (MODC) fused to said  
15 fluorescent protein.

4. The fusion protein of claim 3, wherein said PEST  
sequence-containing portion of said C-terminus of murine ornithine  
decarboxylase comprises an amino acid selected from the group  
20 consisting of MODC<sub>376-461</sub>, MODC<sub>376-456</sub>, MODC<sub>422-461</sub>,

P426A/P427A, P438A, E428A/E430A/E431A, E444A, S440A, S445A,  
T436A, D433A/D434A and D448A.

5                    5.     The fusion protein of claim 3, wherein said protein  
has the sequence shown in SEQ ID No. 1.

10                   6.     An isolated DNA molecule encoding the fusion  
protein of claim 1.

15                   7.     The DNA of claim 6, wherein said DNA encodes a  
fusion protein wherein said fluorescent protein is selected from the  
group consisting of EGFP, ECFP and EYFP.

20                   8.     The DNA of claim 7, wherein said DNA encodes a  
fusion protein comprising a PEST sequence-containing portion of a C-  
terminus of murine ornithine decarboxylase (MODC) fused to the  
fluorescent protein.

9. The DNA of claim 8, wherein said PEST sequence-  
containing portion of a C-terminus of murine ornithine decarboxylase  
is selected from the group consisting of MODC<sub>376-461</sub>, MODC<sub>376-456</sub>,  
5 MODC<sub>422-461</sub>, P426A/P427A, P438A, E428A/E430A/E431A,  
E444A, S440A, S445A, T436A, D433A/D434A and D448A.

10. The isolated DNA of claim 8, having the sequence  
10 shown in SEQ ID No. 2.

11. A vector capable of expressing the isolated DNA  
molecule of claim 6.

12. The vector of claim 11, wherein said vector  
comprises an inducible promoter.

13. A vector capable of expressing the isolated DNA molecule of claim 10.

5 14. The vector of claim 13, wherein said vector comprises an inducible promoter.

10 15. The vector of claim 14, wherein said promoter is tetracycline-inducible.

15 16. A method of producing a stable cell line that expresses a fluorescent protein comprising the step of transfecting cells with the vector of claim 11.

17. The stable cell line produced by the method of claim 16.

20

18. A method of assaying activation or deactivation of transcriptional or translational elements with a transient fluorescent reporter protein, comprising the steps of:

transfecting cells with an expression vector comprising a fluorescent protein fusion protein having a half life of no more than about ten hours, wherein the fusion protein is under the influence of the promoter, transcriptional or translational element; and

detecting the presence, absence or amount of fluorescence in said cells.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein the amount of fluorescence present in the cell is a measure of the fluorescent protein that is being expressed.

20. A method of assaying activation or deactivation of promoters or other transcriptional or translational elements with a transient fluorescent protein reporter protein, comprising the steps of:

transfecting cells with an expression vector comprising a fluorescent fusion protein having a half life of no more than about ten hours, wherein the fluorescent fusion protein is under an influence of said promoter, transcriptional or translational element;

5           treating said transfected cells with a compound of interest; and

          detecting a change in fluorescence upon treatment of the cells with said compound of interest so as to assay the effect of said compound of interest on said activation or deactivation of said  
10 transcription or translation elements.

21. A method of studying cell lineage, comprising the steps of:

15           transfecting undifferentiated cells with a vector expressing the destabilized fusion protein of claim 1;

          growing said undifferentiated cells under conditions in which the undifferentiated cells become differentiated cells; and

          detecting an absence, presence or location of fluorescence  
20 in the differentiated cells.

22. A method of using a fusion protein of claim 1 in cell localization studies, comprising the steps of:

transfecting cells with an expression vector comprising a  
5 GFP fusion protein having a half life of no more than ten hours,  
wherein the fusion protein is linked to a putative cell localization  
element;

growing the cell; and

detecting a location of fluorescence in the cells.